

DEA/Phoenix Police Department HIDTA Title III Initiative

The results in two separate investigations demonstrate the success of the cooperative efforts of the DEA/Phoenix Police Department HIDTA Title III Initiative. The first case involved the Osuna-Labrada drug distribution organization. The organization distributed cocaine, methamphetamine, and marijuana. A total of 54 search warrants were executed throughout the interception, effectively disrupting the activities of the organization. The investigation came to a very successful conclusion in late 1997. A state grand jury indicted 76 defendants on numerous state charges, including illegally conducting an enterprise. Drug seizures during the investigation included more than 100 pounds of cocaine, 30 pounds of methamphetamine, and nearly 50 pounds of marijuana. In addition, more than \$285,000 in U.S. currency, 38 vehicles valued at more than \$60,000, jewelry valued at more than \$14,000, and sixty weapons were seized. The combined effects of these efforts dismantled the organization.

In the second investigation DEA, the Phoenix Police Department, and the Arizona Department of Public Safety cooperated in the DEA/Phoenix Police Department HIDTA Title III Initiative to dismantle a large scale cocaine and marijuana smuggling and distributing organization known as the Figueroa-Espinosa organization. Twelve different telephone lines were intercepted over a 60 day period. The Phoenix end of the illegal operation was headed by Ruben and Eugenio Figueroa-Espinosa who operated Ruben's Produce. The drug shipments to Arizona originated in Sonoita, Mexico. The organization used semi-trucks and other vehicles to transport the cocaine and marijuana to the Mexico side of the Mexico-U.S. border. There, horses and backpackers were used to transport the narcotics to the U.S. side of the border. Load vehicles would meet up with the pack horses or backpackers, transfer the loads, and transport the narcotics to the Phoenix area. The investigation concluded in April 1998. Seventeen search warrants were executed. Among the items seized were 4,690 pounds of marijuana, a small amount of cocaine and methamphetamine, 13 weapons, \$159,314 in U.S. currency, and forty-seven vehicles, including three semi-trucks.

No single agency acting alone could have conducted these investigations and accomplished the results obtained by the collaborative efforts and combined forces, demonstrating, once again, the value of cooperative law enforcement.